

Public Safety Policy Recommendation

Policy Team: Public Safety

Discussion Area: Policy

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Team Members:

I. Recommendation

The Police Interactive Youth training program is a program that hopes to address the gap in knowledge and skills among patrol officers' relationship and interactions with youth. The training program's goal is to limit the opportunity that any interaction between police officers and young people will have a negative impact upon patrol officer and police action. The goals of the training program are:

- Increase patrol officer knowledge of youth behavior and strategies for interacting effectively with youth
- Increase positive police attitudes and outlooks on young individuals
- Increase the opportunity that a certain police/youth interaction will lead to a positive outcome for both parties.
- Increase patrol officer awareness of disproportionate minority contact
- Increase recruitment for the San José Police Department by building a stronger connection and mentorship to youth
- Increase and possibly extend specific training for School Resource Officers

The training program is specifically equipped and taught by certified police trainers in an effective classroom setting. These teachers are able to use a wide set of instructional techniques: slide presentations, video clips, class discussions, small group activities, and individual activities. Such a classroom will help create a collaborative and welcoming environment that will help expedite participants knowledge on youth interaction along with opportunities to share their own unique experiences and perspectives.

II. Problem and Background

This section will help provide an introductory knowledge of the issue and introduce a set of evidence that will support the argument that a training program for youth and police interaction is necessary.

According to the American Bar Association (ABA), a group of officers were surprised to see a specific video illustrating how a youth's brain lit up in effect to seeing photographs of an adult expressing surprise. The specific sections of the brain lighting up within the juvenile youth were in a completely separate location than the parts lighting up in adults.

The youth that participated in the experiment by the ABA stated that the youth saw anger and distrust—not surprise—in the specific photographs of each adults' face. Dr. Jeff Bostic, an adolescent psychiatrist who leads the first day of the Strategies for Youth training, which focuses on teen brains, said, "You see, it's like we're talking French to kids and they're talking Japanese. We've got a problem being heard because their brains are wired differently at this age."

Police are the first responders for the majority of issues in society involving youth in communities throughout America. Then comes to the issue that police should be equipped with the best practices that help create an effective working community. Information and lessons should be shared with patrol officers to be informed on youth topics such as what makes teens push limits, defy authority, and misjudge when to turn left into oncoming traffic.

One of the major focuses will encompass youth violence in which case has several impact on youth such as the physical harm to both the victim and sometimes to the offender. Individuals who have become accustomed to living in dangerous environments at school, at home, or in the neighborhood have led to involved in incidences of depression. Additionally, youth violence is caused by gang involvement and gang membership which leads to youth participation in violent activities. Such gangs are very much often involved in the drug trade, substance use, adult criminal organizations, and serious weapons offenses as the youth become developed. Thus become more important for officers to attend such youth interaction program to help intervene any future problems that could arise from youth going down the wrong pathwar.

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC), in 2001, published a specific study - *A Reassessment of Minority Overrepresentation in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System*- to tackle the extent of disproportionate minority contact in the state. The study helped illustrate how there is an overrepresentation of minority youth in the system and sub par handling and interacting with minority youth at critical decision making moments. Therefore, the JJAC created a task group -primarily police personnel- to analyze problems that occur due to the police handling of juveniles before the written police incident reports. The study helped bring to light the issue that a large quantity of officers lack the knowledge required to separate and categorize problematic adolescent behavior from typical adolescent behavior along with comprehensive social skills to inhibit situation including agitated or defiant youth. Overall, the Connecticut task group helped determine that patrol officers should be taught to interact more effectively with all young people, regardless of their race or background.

III. Policy Components

The components for this policy recommendation are relatively simple. This policy would provide trainings intended to enhance communication and understanding between youth and police officers in our city. There are two possible ways to implement this; the first being much broader and requiring more resources than the second. The first policy suggestion, would be to incorporate additional training in to the San Jose Police Academies training for recruits. This would mean extending the time which recruits spend in the Police Academy in order for them to receive this important supplementary training. Or, a shorter curriculum on interacting with youth could be developed to be integrated into the already existing training regime. However, even smaller programs could be implemented to test this recommendation first as something of a pilot program.

A smaller program would encompass instituting increased training for School Resource Officers. Although currently School Resource Officers undergo specific training for their positions, we propose that it be increased, specifically to include further training on communicating with youth and teenagers specifically.

IV. Advantages

The benefits of the policy would be extensive. This program would help to break down barriers between the San Jose Police Department and local youth, specifically those in low income neighborhoods. By helping officers understand and be aware of the best ways to communicate with youth, would better enable them to reach across divides to help stronger bonds with local youth which would increase neighborhood safety. Having stronger community connections would strengthen not only the safety of youth but also important, the safety of our officers.

Instituting this training for our police officers would open up the opportunity for dialogue, supporting the San Jose Police Department's commitment to community partnership. Fortifying this paramount relationship could down the road also lead to more recruits into law enforcement, particularly from lower income and minority communities.

V. Solvency

This policy can be achieved with the continued dedication and support of local communities, schools and The San José Police Department.

VI. Potential Setbacks

One of the possible setbacks for this policy would be a lack of funding, seeing as the department may have other needs of greater importance. Implementation of this policy could also potentially be difficult due to the fact that The San Jose Police Department has other more pressing priorities, where time and attention are needed.

However, we believe that the benefits of this policy (as outlined above) would strengthen our city in such a way as to outweigh the costs.

Research

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34996604>
- <https://nasro.org/basic-sro-course/>
- <https://www.mercurynews.com/2014/08/23/ranks-of-bay-area-police-departments-largely-white/>
- <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/press-room/99?task=view>
- <https://ncg.org/funding-area/public-policy-social-justice>
- <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/15/politics/missouri-first-grade-gun-lessons/index.html>
- http://www.polc.org/success_stories/junior-public-safety-academy-provides-interactive-lessons-for-young-children/
- <http://healthland.time.com/2012/12/18/school-security-why-its-so-hard-to-keep-kids-safe/>
- <http://www.dailyrepublic.com/solano-news/vacaville/police-teach-public-safety-in-vacaville-school-district-which-adds-new-way-to-grade/>
- <http://www.sjpd.org/BFO/Community/TeamKids/>
- <http://www.sjpd.org/BFO/Community/SchoolLiaison/>
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Supplementary

- [Statistics on Youth Gun Violence & Gun Access | Giffords Law Center ...](#)
- [Violence by youth gangs and youth groups as a crime ...](#)
- [Youth violence and positive psychology: Research ...](#)
- [... opportunities for low-achieving, low-income youth](#)